

Knowing Your Small Group Participants

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Understand preconceived assumptions about your class.

- Know if your class is marketed with low expectations. These classes rarely will do any assigned work. For these types of classes the teacher must be very intentional to include things to help stimulate the memory of the points. Each lesson, even in a series, needs to have a stand-alone point because often attendance to these groups is erratic. Emphasis needs to be given to review each week.
- Some classes are marketed with expectations and costs. In these classes, expect your students to work. Hold your classes accountable and help facilitate life change.
- Some groups are marketed with a high social emphasis. The goal for these groups is usually to help assimilate people into the corporate group. Expect little life change, consistency, or accountability in these groups.

Work at breaking down barriers in your group.

- Capitalize on times before and after class and other social settings to talk to individuals one on one to help them get comfortable with you. Try to get back around to each member every few weeks.
- The more you know a person in a variety of settings, the more you will know how to reach them in your teaching. You can also see beyond their outward appearances to their real heart issues.
- Always use eye contact so people know you are tuned in to them.
- Be vulnerable. When you share stories that are personal, they can see you as a “real” person.
- Learn whom you can call on by name, who has studied and will have ideas, and who needs a nudge to talk in class.

Consistently be evaluating your group to see if you are connecting.

- Watch for eye contact, body posture, attentive expression, following the Scriptures, taking notes.
- Be aware if the room is comfortable or distracting. Things like room temperature, chair set-up, or the topic of conversation can inhibit or help attentiveness and discussion.
- Be aware of student interpersonal relationships. Some can be helpful, and others can hinder.

Understand how personalities affect your group.

- **Introverts**
If a person is not fragile, ask direct questions. Refer to her by name, and if possible, use things, issues, or people she knows in your question to help bridge the question to her answer. Ask her open-ended question instead of yes/no questions. If she is fragile, draw her out after class.
- **Extroverts**
Be careful. It is easy to favor them because they are easy to draw out. They can easily take up too much time or take the group on a rabbit trail. If she is not easily offended, break in and say, "Thank you for that comment," or "Does anyone else have something to share?" or "That's a really good point, but we'll have to discuss that after class." Ask them yes/no questions instead of open-ended questions.
- **Intellectuals**
The challenge is to get these women to be compassionate and to act on the material presented. Ask practical follow-through questions or questions about how she would have felt. If you need a good pointed answer to a question, ask her for an answer.
- **Emotionals**
The challenge is to get her to think and engage with the teaching. Ask her questions to help her think: "Why was this important?" or "What was driving this situation?" If you want the class to connect emotionally with the lesson, ask her for illustrations.
- **The Fixers**
These women have an opinion on everything. This can discourage other people from sharing. Affirm her good points, and follow up with, "What other ways could we . . .?" Avoid letting her become the final authority, otherwise the others won't share.
- **The Needy**
These women draw attention to themselves. She needs the teacher's empathy and affirmation, but it is important not to let her dominate. Try to move in quickly and say, "Let's pray about this now," or "We will need to follow up after class." Be

careful. Some of these women don't really want to learn because then they would have to change. If they change, then they wouldn't get the attention they crave.

- **The Unteachable**

Be patient and keep trying to build rapport. Try to understand why she feels the way she does: Dislikes learning? Under stress? Subject is too close to her past? Coming only for social reasons? She doesn't agree? She doesn't want to change? She thinks she knows it already?

- **The Teachable**

This is a teacher's joy.